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Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in Illinois



... A guide to finding help
for grandparent caregivers
coping with the unexpected
responsibility of raising
young children

Task Force on
Grandparents Raising
Grandchildren
in Illinois

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Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in Illinois

"Grace's" dreams of retirement were shattered when she took into her home her three young grandchildren. Now, at age 60, she is starting a family -- with the limited financial resources of a retired person.

"Dorothy" and "Jim" are faced with raising an active five-year-old, while they both suffer from arthritis. Dorothy is also worried because her grandson is showing signs of having problems in school.

In Illinois, an estimated 70,000 children live with a grandparent or other relative. According to the U.S. Census Bureau the number of such children increased nation-wide by 40% during the period from 1980 to 1990. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) estimates that over the last 25 years, the number of children living in households headed by grandparents has increased by more than 50%. Reasons for this increase might include death of the parent(s), HIV/AIDS or other tragic illness, drug and/or alcohol abuse, domestic violence, teenage pregnancy, lack of parental responsibility, and economic problems.

Persons who find themselves raising grandchildren or other minor relatives range in age from their 40s to their 80s. They are from all walks of life and all cultural and economic groups. Many of the grandparents are overwhelmed with the situations they face. Many are totally unprepared to deal with problems facing parents and children of the '90s.



Therefore, mid-life and older "grandparent caregivers" have many questions related to the care and responsibility of raising young people. These questions include concerns over legal issues (custody, guardianship, foster care and adoption), finding resources for the developmental needs of a child (especially if the child has special needs), and locating financial assistance that can help them deal with the expense of adding a young person to the household. Coping with these concerns can also take a toll on the grandparent's health. Signs of depression and anxiety are common among grandparents raising grandchildren.

Is there help available for older people who find themselves in such a situation?

YES.

There are a number of government and private service agencies across the state which can provide information and various kinds of assistance to aid older caregivers of young children as they try to cope with their new responsibilities.

There are also advocacy organizations. One such advocacy organization is the **Task Force on Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in Illinois**. Their goal is to promote awareness of the needs of "grandparent caregivers" and to provide informational assistance to grandparents raising grandchildren.

If you would like more information about the task force, have additional information about "grandparent caregivers" that you would like to share, have questions or are in need of further information, you may contact the Illinois Department on Aging's **Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966** (Voice and TDD), 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

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If you are a grandparent raising a grandchild, it is important to remember you are not alone. Also, **don't forget to consider your own needs as a caregiver.** Watch for signs of depression or sadness, back pain -- especially if you must lift a very young child, increased blood pressure and fatigue.

**The Illinois
Department on Aging**

**Senior HelpLine:
1-800-252-8966**

(Voice and TDD)

Monday through Friday, except
holidays, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

This brochure was developed by the **Task Force on Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in Illinois** and is being printed and distributed in cooperation with the **Illinois Department on Aging**, a member agency of the task force.

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